

Captain's Log: Stardate 54228.4

We have entered orbit around an M-class planet that is remarkably similar to Earth. We have done a cross-reference check with the Seleri database that was provided by Doctor Heseq, discovering that the name given this planet by his ancestors is Jarek III. The inhabitants are known as the Habiru. Lieutenant Commander T'Les is running sensor sweeps before an away team is sent planetside for a closer survey.

“Sensor scans are complete, Captain,” Lieutenant Commander T'Les stated.

“What have you found, Commander?” Stuart replied.

“The information that I have gathered is quite interesting,” the Vulcan said. “Jarek III rotates on a twenty-two point six-degree axis once every twenty-three hours, forty-seven minutes. It has one natural satellite, approximately nine-tenths the size of Earth's moon.”

Captain Stuart considered what the science officer was saying. “What else did you come up with?”

T'Les continued her report. “It takes three hundred sixty point three days to revolve around its sun. The planet's gravity is point nine nine seven of Earth normal.”

“Life forms?” Commander Leeson inquired.

T'Les almost showed excitement in response to the information that she had gathered but used the techniques of control that she had been trained with to keep those emotions in check. “There is a variety of flora and fauna present on the planet that is very similar to those found on Earth,” she said. “I have also detected a humanoid species that would rate very primitive by our standards.”

“For instance?” Stuart pressed his science officer for more detail.

“They appear to be organized in villages. However, I have detected some cities,” T'Les replied. “Their building structures are made of wood and stone with some thatched roofing. They appear to have an agrarian society with evidence of some domesticated herd animals.” T'Les paused momentarily. “I would rate their society at the same level as Earth's early to middle Bronze Age.”

“Thank you, Commander,” Stuart said, to which T'Les nodded silently. “Exec, what are your thoughts?”

“I definitely think we should take a closer look,” Melanie Leeson said. “I recommend that the away team have no contact with the inhabitants.”

Stuart nodded. “Agreed,” he said. “Have your team wear isolation suits so that you can get close to the people.”

“Aye Captain,” Leeson replied. “You're with me, Yoshi,” she pointed to the chief of security, who rose from the tactical station and moved toward the turbolift. Leeson tapped her communicator as she followed Lieutenant Nakamara into the lift. “Doctor Stuart, Counselor Goodman report to transporter room two for away team duty,” she said as the doors slid shut.

To Boldly Go: Protectors of Zion

A U.S.S. Providence Story

By Cleve Johnson

The members of the away team, unnoticed by the inhabitants of Jarek III due to the technology of the isolation suits, observed the people of the city. The helmet for each suit had an open communicator for the wearer to keep in contact with the ship and other away team personnel. The helmet's visor was made of infrared glass to allow the person in the suit to see people who were cloaked in other suits.

Yoshi Nakamara scanned the stone walls around the city. "Very primitive," he commented.

"We were just as primitive several thousand years ago," Commander Leeson replied. "These people look as human as someone born on Earth."

"That's because they are human," Doctor Stuart said.

"What was that, Jan?" Leeson said in surprise.

"I said that these people are human," the doctor replied. "I got close enough to scan their DNA. They are the same species as us."

Leeson could hardly believe what she heard the doctor say. "Are you sure?"

"No doubt about it, Mel," Stuart stated. "I ran the scans three times to be sure."

"And their domesticated animals are indigenous to Earth as well," Nakamara interjected. "I've seen sheep, goats, oxen, and burrows."

"I better contact the captain," Leeson said. "This is too coincidental to be a case of parallel planet development."

"Hey, look at this," James Goodman said excitedly.

Leeson, Stuart, and Nakamara walked toward the gate where Goodman was standing. "What is it, Counselor?" Leeson asked.

Goodman pointed at the frame around the gate. "Look at the writing," he said. "Are you familiar with those letters?"

Leeson shook her head. "No," she said. "Should I be?"

Goodman was excited as he scanned the alien script. "It's an ancient language from Earth," he said. "It's Hebrew."



"Would you repeat that, Exec?" Captain Stuart said.

"I knew you wouldn't believe me," Leeson's voice replied. "Counselor Goodman has identified the written language as Hebrew and the doctor has confirmed that these people's ancestors came from Earth."

Stuart shook his head. “That’s quite a discovery, Exec,” he said. “What do you suggest?”

“I’d like to find out how they got here.”

“So would I, Exec,” Stuart said. He thought a moment before deciding what the next step would be. “See if you can find a library or somewhere where written records are stored,” he said. “Scan any records you can find and we’ll let the ship’s computer translate it.”

“Yes, Captain,” Leeson replied. *“I’ll report back in fifteen minutes. Leeson out.”*

Rob Stuart leaned back in his chair and contemplated the mystery of how a planet almost two hundred light years from Earth could have a population of humans—specifically, a group of ancient Hebrews—living on it. He knew that an alien culture must be involved.

The communicator beeped, interrupting the captain’s thoughts. *“Skipper. You’re needed on the bridge,”* Blake Adams said.

Stuart rose from his seat and started toward the door that separated his ready room from the bridge. “On my way.”

The door slid open and Stuart stepped into the bridge. He walked toward the center of the room where Lieutenant Commander Blake Adams was seated in the captain’s chair. “What’s going on, Blake?”

Adams rose from the chair and turned to face Stuart. “A ship is approaching at high warp, Skipper.”

“Configuration?” Stuart asked as he sat down.

“It doesn’t match anything I’ve seen before,” Blake said. “Should I have the away team beamed up?”

Stuart nodded. “Make it so.”

Blake took the first officer’s seat to contact the transporter room.

Stuart looked at the young officer that sat at the tactical station. “Mister Patrick, hail the alien vessel.”

“Aye Captain,” Ensign Patrick stated. “Hailing frequencies are open, Captain.”

Stuart fixed his eyes on the main viewer, watching as the alien ship dropped from warp and entered orbit of Jarek III. The ship was twice the size as the *Providence*. Its features were rounded and long like a cylinder. It had three spherical projections coming from the middle section of the cylinder at equidistant points. To Stuart, these appeared to be the warp nacelles of the alien vessel.

“This is Captain Robert P. Stuart of the *U.S.S. Providence*, representing the United Federation of Planets,” he said.

The image of the alien ship on the viewscreen was replaced by the image of Stuart’s counterpart on the alien ship. The alien was humanoid. He had long golden hair, dark olive skin, and eyes that seemed to shine like flame due to the silver-colored

pigment of the irises. The alien did not smile, but he had a peaceful look on his face. He opened his mouth to speak, but the universal translator did not immediately give the alien language its English equivalent.

“Is there a malfunction with the translator, Lieutenant?” Stuart directed his question to Mary Goodman.

“Negative, Captain,” Goodman replied. “Their language is more complex than the others in our linguistic database, Sir.”

Stuart turned toward the viewer. “Our computer is trying to translate your language,” he stated. “I don’t know if you can understand our language, but please keep talking if you can understand me. Our computer may take a few minutes to learn the intricacies of your grammar.”

The alien on the viewscreen nodded as if he understood what Stuart had just said. He nodded to someone off screen and said something that sounded like gibberish to the crew of the *Providence*.

“The aliens are uploading information into our main computer, Captain,” Lieutenant Commander T’Les stated.

“Are they trying to download anything from our computer, Commander?” Stuart asked.

“No Sir,” T’Les replied. “The information that we are receiving is being stored in our linguistic files. I believe they are teaching their language to our computer.”

“Let’s try this again,” Stuart said. He turned to the viewer. “I am Rob Stuart, captain of the Federation starship *Providence*.”

The alien on the screen peered back at Stuart. “*I am Commander Tal of the Hurak vessel En’Ka Nath,*” he stated. “*What is your purpose here?*”

“We are on a mission of peaceful exploration, Commander Tal,” Stuart replied.

Tal did not physically show any sign of emotion. “*We are also explorers, Captain,*” he said. “*But I must ask that you do not interfere with the inhabitants of this planet. They are under our protection.*”

“Non-interference in developing cultures is our highest law,” Stuart said. “But we have discovered that the inhabitants of this planet are members of our race. They came from our world, which is almost two hundred light years from here.”

“*We were unaware that the Habiru were not native to this world, Captain,*” Tal stated. “*We discovered them fourteen of their years ago and have been studying them since then.*”

Stuart stood and walked toward the viewer. “Would you consider meeting to share what you know about the Habiru?” he asked.

“*I think that would be prudent,*” Tal stated. “*Shall we meet on your vessel or ours?*”

Before Stuart could answer the question, he heard the turbolift doors slide open. He turned to see the away team, led by his first officer, enter the bridge. “I will yield to your decision on the meeting place,” he said.

“Captain.” It was Commander Leeson who tried to raise an objection.

Tal must have noticed Leeson’s look of concern. *“I would be glad to have you visit my ship, Captain Stuart, but if you would prefer yours...”*

“I’m sure your ship will be more than sufficient,” Stuart interjected, ignoring Leeson’s look of warning. “I need to have a briefing with the away team that has returned from the surface before coming over.”

Tal bowed slightly. *“I quite understand, Captain,”* he said. *“Will thirty of your minutes be acceptable?”*

Stuart nodded. “I will beam over in thirty minutes, Commander Tal.”

Leeson stepped toward Stuart as the alien ship orbiting the planet replaced the image of Tal on the viewer. “I don’t like you going over there, Captain,” she said. “I think you should have him beamed to the *Providence.*”

Stuart smiled at his first officer. “I consider myself a good judge of character, Exec,” he said. “And my instincts tell me that Commander Tal can be trusted.”

“I hope that you won’t go alone,” Jan Stuart said to her husband.

The captain nodded to his wife. “Let’s discuss the details in the conference room,” he stated. “Exec, have the senior staff assemble in five minutes.”

Mel Leeson had more to say, but decided to address her concerns with the captain in private. “Can I speak with you first, Captain?”

Stuart could see that his first officer did not accept his decision to beam over to the alien ship. “In my ready room,” he replied. “Blake, please assemble the senior officers.”

Blake nodded his acknowledgment. “Your wish is my will, Skipper,” he said with an impish grin.



Captain Stuart sat behind his desk and motioned for the first officer to sit across from him. Commander Leeson took the seat but did not relax her determined posture.

“I take it that you don’t want me to go over there,” Stuart said calmly.

Leeson tried to keep her resolve, but the captain’s nonchalant attitude threw her off guard. “You know Starfleet’s policy on away missions,” she said.

Stuart leaned back in his chair. “Of course I do, Exec,” he replied. “But as the captain, I have the right to make the final decision.”

Leeson shook her head. “You’re not expendable, Sir,” she stated. “And your place is on the bridge until we have determined the aliens’ intentions.”

“If you were captain and your first officer refused to let you lead an away mission, what would you do?” Stuart asked.

Leeson looked down at the desk and contemplated Stuart’s question? She looked back to her CO. “I’m not sure,” she replied. “But I’m not the captain. So any answer I give would not be relevant.”

“It’s something you should think about since you will have your own command one day,” Stuart stated, trying to make his first officer realize his point. “There is something called captain’s prerogative, Exec. And I’m exercising it.”

Commander Leeson knew that she would not win this round, but would force a compromise. Or at least try to. “You’re the captain and I will abide by your decision,” she stated. “But I want to go with you.”

Stuart shook his head. “No, Commander. I want you on the bridge in case my instincts about Tal are wrong,” he said. He saw at the pleading look in his first officer’s eyes. “I will take the counselor with me. His empathic sense will tell if the Hurak can be trusted or not.”

Melanie Leeson thought about what Stuart said and finally conceded. “Aye Captain.”

Stuart rose from his chair. “Let’s get to that briefing, shall we?”



Captain Stuart listened as his first officer finished her report of the away mission. He turned to his wife. “And what did you find, Jan?”

Doctor Stuart shifted in her chair. “Well, the Habiru are definitely human,” she said. “This cannot be a case of parallel planet development since even the humanoid races that are most like us have some deviation in DNA or slightly different internal organ arrangements.”

“So how did they get here?” Blake Adams asked.

The conference room was silent until Lieutenant Commander T’Les spoke. “Perhaps their ancestors were brought here by the Preservers.”

“Preservers?” It was Mary Goodman who raised the question.

“There is evidence of an alien race that has been designated as the Preservers, who have taken sentient life forms from their home planets and transplanted them on other worlds to ensure that the race survives,” T’Les explained in a lecturing tone.

“Regardless of how they got here...,” Counselor Goodman started, “...we should take this opportunity to study these people. This is an opportunity of a lifetime to discover how the ancient Hebrews lived.”

Stuart nodded. “I understand,” he said. “I appreciate your knowledge of theology and ancient peoples of the Bible. I’m sure your background studies will be invaluable.”

“Shouldn’t we be thinking about returning them to Earth?” Lieutenant Nakamara asked. “They are a part of our people after all.”

“That would be a violation of the Prime Directive,” Commander Leeson said.

“They’re from Earth,” Jan Edwards said in response. “The Prime Directive doesn’t apply.”

“Doesn’t it?” Leeson asked. “These people are thirty-five hundred years out of time.”

“I must point out, Doctor, that *these* humans are not from Earth,” T’Les stated. “Their ancestors apparently were brought from Earth centuries ago.”

“But they’re human,” Jan protested.

The captain, who had listened to the debate, straightened in his chair. “I have to agree with Commander Leeson,” he said. “Just because they’re human doesn’t mean that the Prime Directive doesn’t apply. Personally, I would like to have them relocated to Earth, but we must not interfere with their culture.”

No one else offered opinions or suggestions. The officers of the starship *Providence* knew when Captain Stuart made up his mind, they had the responsibility of abiding by his decision.

Stuart glanced around the table, reading the facial expressions of his officers. He looked at James Goodman. “Counselor Goodman will accompany me to the Hurak vessel,” he said. “Exec, you have the bridge.”

The captain stood, as did the others around the conference table. “Dismissed.”

Stuart started toward the door with Counselor Goodman following close behind as the Doctor ran to block the exit. “I want you two in sickbay before beaming over.”

“I don’t think we have time for a physical right now, Jan,” Stuart said.

“Don’t make me pull rank, Captain,” the doctor said with a mischievous gleam in her eyes. “I want to make sure you both come back in one piece...just in case.”

“Let me guess,” Rob Stuart said. “Subcutaneous transponders?”

“Very perceptive,” Jan stated. “I knew I didn’t marry you just for your good looks.”

James chuckled as the trio exited the conference room.



Commander Leeson was clearly nervous as her pacing indicated to the rest of the bridge crew. She would occasionally peer at the image of the Hurak ship on the main viewer. Finally, noticing that the eyes of T’Les and Mary Goodman were watching, the first officer moved toward the center of the bridge and sat down in the captain’s chair.

Leeson turned her seat to face the OPS officer. “Inform the transporter room to maintain a lock on the away team at all times, Lieutenant Goodman.”

“Yes Sir,” Mary Goodman replied.

Blake Adams entered the bridge and stood beside Leeson. “You look nervous,” he said.

“You’re not?” Leeson asked. “You’re his best friend, Blake. I can’t believe that you’re not concerned.”

“I’m always concerned when it comes to Rob, Mel,” Adams replied in his usual nonchalant attitude. He noticed that the first officer was not amused as she crossed her arms. “He’ll be fine.”



Counselor Goodman took his position on the transporter platform. He waited for the captain to join him, but also being a married man, he knew the importance of saying goodbye.

“You be careful over there,” the doctor ordered. “I expect to see you back here.”

Rob smiled at his wife. “I’ll see you soon,” he said. Then, he kissed the doctor and casually moved toward the platform.

Chief John McKinney waited patiently as the captain took his position. “The Hurak vessel has provided coordinates for transport, Captain,” he said.

“Energize.”

The two officers were whisked away in the familiar energy pattern of the transporter beam...

...And found themselves in a room with curved, jade-colored walls.

Commander Tal was the only person in the room to greet the two Starfleet officers. He stood still, yet relaxed. “Welcome aboard, Captain Stuart,” he said.

“Thank you, Commander Tal,” Stuart replied as he approached with his hand extended.

Tal looked at Stuart’s outstretched arm and realized it must be a gesture of greeting. He extended his hand in the same manner—outstretched and hanging in the air.

Stuart grinned and put his hand in Tal’s, firmly gripping it. “A human custom,” he said.

“Ah,” Tal replied.

Stuart released the Hurak’s hand and turned toward the counselor standing in the background. “This is Counselor James Goodman,” he said.

Tal stretched out his hand toward Goodman, who gladly shook it. “Welcome aboard, Counselor Goodman.”

“A pleasure,” Goodman said.

Tal pulled out a control device and touched one of the buttons. A table and three chairs rose up from the deck as if the deck plate suddenly transformed its shape.

“Please sit down,” Tal said as he took his seat.

Rob Stuart and James Goodman sat at the triangular shaped table that was designed so each of the three individuals would be seated across from each other.

“Captain Stuart,” Tal began. “I understand that you claim that the Habiru are from your planet.”

“Well, not exactly,” Stuart replied. “Based on the findings of my officers, it appears that their ancestors originated on Earth and were brought to Jarek III about three to four millennia ago.”

“And who brought them here, Captain?” Tal asked politely.

Stuart did not know for sure, but he had to answer Commander Tal’s question. “We believe it was a race that we call the Preservers,” he said. “I think that we should be allowed to investigate the possibility.”

Counselor Goodman remained silent and opened his empathic sense, trying to read Tal’s emotional state. He had hoped that the Hurak emotions could be interpreted as well as human ones.

“If the Habiru did come from your world, I agree that you have the right to investigate and study their culture,” Tal stated. “I would be willing to allow that if certain conditions are agreed to.”

“And what conditions would you require?” Stuart asked.

Tal allowed a slight smile to appear on his face. The first that Stuart had observed. “You must not allow yourselves to interact or be seen by the Habiru,” he said. “Their lives must not be interfered with in any way.”

“I absolutely agree to that, Commander,” Stuart replied.

“And you must report all of your research findings to our science council,” Tal said. “If these conditions are agreed to, I will share joint jurisdiction of Jarek III with you, Captain.”

Stuart thought a moment and had no complaints or reservations with Tal’s proposal. He did wonder if Tal could get approval from his superiors to agree or not. “I find your terms completely reasonable, Commander Tal,” he said. “When will your government give its consent?”

Tal almost laughed at Stuart’s statement. “I have the authority to speak for my government, Captain,” he said. “Among my people, anyone granted command authority can make these types of agreements and our leaders will abide by them.”

“But what if you were to make an agreement that was contrary to the wishes of your government?” Goodman asked.

“Then I would probably be removed from command, Counselor,” Tal replied. “But the agreement would still be upheld. One does not command unless he has the full trust of the government.”

“As a Starfleet captain, I have certain authority granted to me as well,” Stuart said. “But that authority is not on the same level as yours.”

“We are probably more alike than we realize,” Tal stated. “There is much we can learn from one another.”

“I agree, Commander,” Stuart replied. “To learn is why we are exploring the depths of space and making contact with other species.”

“We *are* much alike, Captain Stuart.”



Stuart and Goodman entered the bridge. Mary Goodman smiled at her husband, glad that he was back from the Hurak starship. Commander Melanie Leeson’s face showed great relief that Stuart had returned safely.

“Exec, we seem to have made some new friends,” Stuart said as he sat in the command chair.

“What about the people on Jarek III?” Leeson asked.

“They will remain and develop naturally,” Stuart replied. “The Hurak have agreed that we can do whatever research we see fit as long as the Habiru are unaware of our presence.”

“So the Hurak have given up their claim to the planet,” Leeson said.

“No,” Stuart replied. “We are going to do a joint study with Tal’s people. He has also invited us to visit their command base for some R and R once we set up a covert center of operations. We need to make preparations for a *duck blind*, he said.

“A *duck blind*?” Leeson said. “How will we put that together without the Habiru from noticing?”

“I’ll leave that up to you, Commander,” Stuart said with a mischievous grin.

Leeson thought a moment and looked to Mary Goodman, then to Blake. “I’m going to need people with holographic programming knowledge and engineering skills,” she said.

Stuart looked at his first officer. “I’m sure Blake can help you with the holographic programming,” he said. “And Chief McKinney has both the programming and the engineering skills required.”

“I would also like to have Mary assist Lieutenant Sales on the engineering aspects of the construction,” Leeson said.

“You can have anyone you like, Exec,” Stuart said. “As long as it gets done.”



Five weeks had passed since the Habiru had been discovered. Rob Stuart looked out the window at the planet below and wondered about the people that on the surface. He wondered how they had come to be on Jarek III. As far as the inhabitants were concerned other planets did not exist or at least were not considered important. All that they knew was the world where they lived.

Stuart turned away from the window and moved toward the door that separated his ready room from the bridge. The doors slid open and he walked out to the bridge and into the nearest turbolift. “Deck two,” he said as the turbolift doors slid closed behind him.

When the doors opened, Stuart exited the lift and he started toward his quarters, but he decided to make a slight detour. He walked through the curved corridor to the forward section of the second level of the starship where Counselor Goodman's office was located. He pressed the call button on the panel next to the door to announce himself and a moment later the door slid open.

Stuart walked into the office, noticing Counselor Goodman sitting at his desk with several PADDs spread across the desktop. "Am I interrupting?" he asked.

Goodman motioned for the captain to have a seat next to the desk. "Not at all, Captain," he said. "I was brushing up on my Hebrew and Aramaic to see if I can translate some of the writings that I recorded last month."

"The computer should be able to do that," Stuart said.

Goodman smiled. "But letting the computer do it isn't as much fun," he said.

Captain Stuart nodded in agreement. "It's good to know when not to rely too much on the computer," he said as he sat down. "The *duck blind* is finished," he said. "I plan to assign a research team to do a study of the Habiru."

"I thought the Federation science ministry would be sending a team of specialists," Goodman said.

"They are," Stuart replied. "But they won't be here for at least another month. I decided that since this is our discovery, we should be the first to gather the first bits of information."

Goodman smiled. "I would like to volunteer for the away team, Captain," he said.

Stuart stood up and patted James on the shoulder. "I've already assigned you to it, James," he stated. "In fact, you will be in command."

Goodman's mouth almost dropped to the floor in disbelief. "I don't know what to say, Captain," he stated. "Thank you, Sir."

"I have all confidence that you will do a fine job," the captain said. "And being a married man now myself, I understand that several weeks away from your wife just wouldn't do. And since you will need someone with operations and engineering skills to maintain the equipment, I've assigned Mary to the team."

Goodman's smile widened. "Thank you, Captain."

"You'll beam down tomorrow at 0800," Stuart said.

The captain left Goodman's office and went to his quarters.



James and Mary Goodman waited in the transporter room for the rest of the away team to arrive. Mary looked at her husband and smiled. "You look like a little boy who got a new puppy at Christmas," she said.

"This is the chance of a lifetime, Mary," James said. "How should I act?"

Mary smiled. "Like a little boy who just got a puppy at Christmas," she replied.

James bent down to kiss his wife when the door slid open. He looked up to see Ensign Hans Koller, the ship's archeologist enter and move toward the Goodmans.

"Good morning, Sir," Koller said as he set two cases on the center of the transporter platform.

"Good morning, Ensign," James Goodman replied. "Ensign Larkin should be here in a moment, so we should be able to get going soon."

As if on cue, the door slid open again to reveal the anthropologist. "Ensign Kyle Larkin reporting, Sir," Larkin said.

"At ease, Ensign," Goodman said. "Put your stuff on the platform and we'll get going."

Larkin placed his things next to the other cases on the platform and he stepped onto one of the pads.

James and Mary joined the two junior officers on the transporter, taking their positions. "Energ..."

The door slid open once again and Captain Stuart entered the room. "Leaving without saying goodbye?" he asked.

"Sorry Captain," James said. "I didn't think you would be seeing us off."

"I just wanted to say good luck," Stuart said. "I also wanted you to know that I am taking the ship to the Hurak station to develop our relationship with our new friends. We'll pick you up on stardate 54468."

"I hoped to have more time," James stated.

"Do what you can in the time you have," Stuart said. "We need to leave something for the Federation team to do when they get here," he added.

James smiled at that. "Yes, Sir."

Stuart stepped up and shook James' hand. "Good luck, Counselor." Stuart stepped back and walked back to the transport console. He stood next to Chief McKinney. "Energize."

Rob Stuart watched as the away team disappeared into the energy beam. He nodded to McKinney and left the room.

Captain Robert P. Stuart walked through the corridor and contemplated the inhabitants of Zion, his designation for Jarek III, their origins, and their lives. He thought about James and his first command experience. *He's going to have fun*, Stuart thought as he walked the corridors of the starship *Providence*.

The End